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AUTHOR	Phinney, Lisa; Schoen, Mary Kay; Hause, Ellen
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ABSTRACT

This document is a report on a 2001 national survey of community colleges conducted by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC). The survey was designed to identify various community service programs that community colleges administered, partnered, or sponsored. The study surveyed 1,067 community colleges, with 363 colleges (34%) responding. Results indicated that community colleges were engaged in a variety of community service programs and projects. Some colleges offered facilities to house community service programs. Other colleges offered leadership workshops, health screenings, diversity programs, and cultural art events. More than 80% of the responding community colleges mentioned community service in their mission statements. Over 60% of the respondents actively encouraged students to participate in community service projects. Some colleges offered students volunteer referral and college credit for volunteer work. Many colleges partnered with other organizations in joint community service efforts. The colleges also partnered with local and state governments, healthcare providers, non-profit organizations, law enforcement agencies, K-12 schools, and churches. Colleges offered programs targeted to youth and senior citizens. Their main goal was to offer lifelong learning opportunities to the community. The report includes Web site information and provides numerous tables. (MKF)

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AACC-RB-02-9

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RESEARCH BRIEF

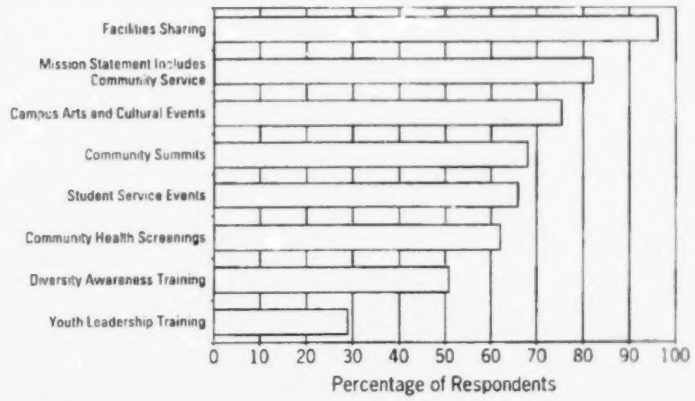
Community College Engagement in Community Programs and Services

By Lisa Phinney, Mary Kay Schoen, and Ellen Hause

In 2001, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) conducted a national survey of community colleges to identify their community programs and services. Survey responses demonstrated a strong level of community college commitment to improving the quality of life in their communities and offering a place to pursue lifelong learning. Responding colleges indicated that they are engaged in a wide variety of programs and services designed to reflect the diverse needs of the communities they serve, with many partnering with local and state government, nonprofit organizations, and local schools. Survey findings include the following highlights:

- More than 82 percent of community colleges reported that offering community programs and services is part of their mission statement.
- To encourage student involvement in the community, 66 percent of responding colleges held special community service events, and 45 percent provided service learning opportunities.
- More than half of college respondents (51 percent) provided diversity awareness training; 81 percent sponsored events highlighting other cultures.
- Twenty-nine percent of respondents provided leadership training for youth and others.
- Sixty-eight percent of responding colleges facilitated community summits on local issues.
- Almost 62 percent of colleges held health screenings and health fairs for the community.
- Seventy-six percent of respondents provided access to arts and cultural events, and a little more than 50 percent sponsored a museum.

FIGURE 1 **Percentage of Colleges Offering Community Programs and Services**



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Methodology

The survey's 29 questions elicited information about community programs and services outside of academic course work or contract training. One question asked respondents to describe one or two particularly successful or unique community programs. A sample of those programs are highlighted.

A total of 1,067 community college campuses received the survey and 363 colleges responded, resulting in a 34 percent response rate. Survey results were analyzed to determine if they were geographically representative, as well as representative of student enrollment. Colleges in suburban areas and midsize cities were more likely to respond than colleges in small towns and rural areas. Therefore, the sample cannot be considered to be random and may not represent all community colleges nationally.

Community Service

Community colleges are often actively involved in their communities. Survey responses indicated that community engagement is central to the mission and value statements of community colleges. More than 82 percent of responding colleges identified community service as part of their mission statement. While only a small percentage required community service for graduation (1 percent), 66 percent sponsored special community service events, 45 percent offered service learning opportunities, and almost 40 percent encouraged student volunteerism through referral services (Figure).

Northwest State Community College in Archbold, OH, supports local arts by providing the *Black Swamp Arts Council* with free office space, telephones, computers, and secretarial services. Black Swamp Arts uses the school's facilities for performances and craft fairs.

FIGURE 2 **Percentage of Colleges Encouraging Student Service in the Community**

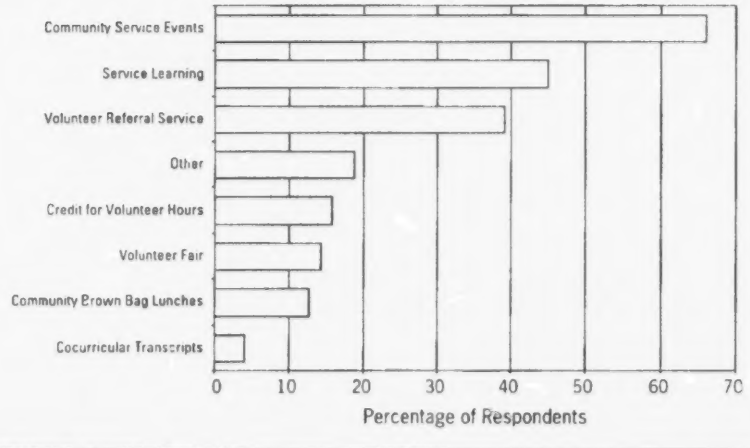
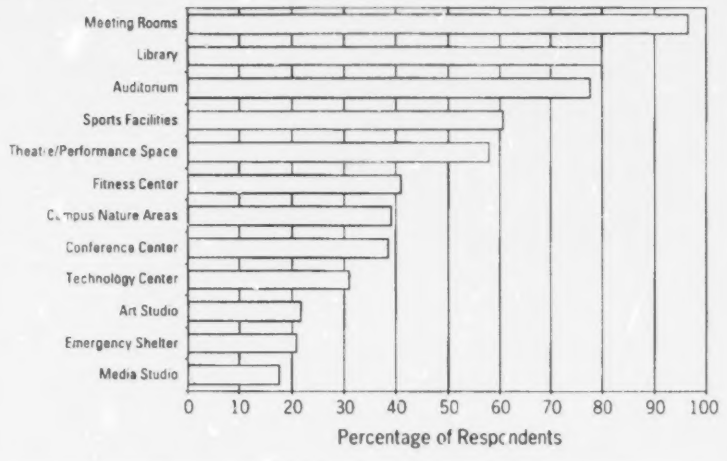


FIGURE 3 **Percentage of Community Colleges Sharing Facilities**



Many responding colleges engaged in community service by providing facilities for community groups. Figure 3 shows that 96 percent of respondents provided meeting rooms for community groups; 78 percent made their auditoriums available to the community. Almost 80 percent allowed the community to use their library facilities.

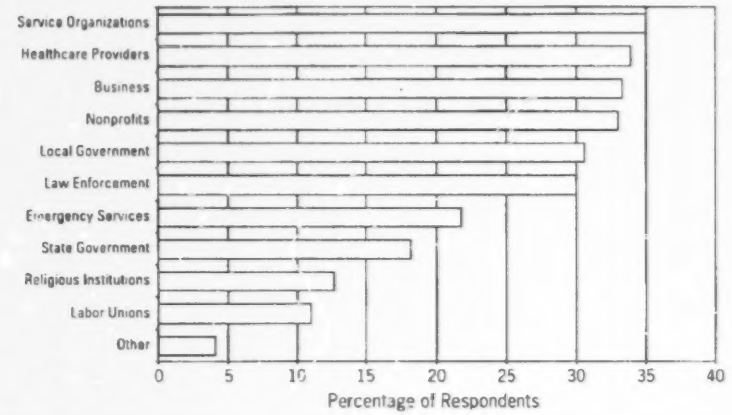
Partnerships and Collaboration

Most community colleges seek to reach a broad audience in their communities. To help ensure success in meeting local challenges, many colleges have formed solid partnerships with local institutions. Figure 4 outlines examples of partnerships that responding community colleges reported, including partnerships with local (31 percent) and state government (18 percent). Thirty percent of respondents partnered with law enforcement agencies to create community policing or mediation programs.

Service organizations and healthcare providers were the most frequently reported partnerships with responding community colleges at 35 and 34 percent. Thirty-three percent of responding colleges partnered with local business.

In Oregon City, OR, Clackamas Community College's *John Inskeep Environmental Learning Center* works in partnership with private industry, public agencies, school districts, and other not-for-profit organizations to provide innovative environmental education and demonstrate cooperative solutions to complex regional ecological challenges.

FIGURE 4 **Percentage of Community Colleges Working in Partnership**



K–12 Outreach

In serving as leaders of lifelong learning, responding colleges indicated a strong involvement with local elementary, middle, and secondary schools. Almost 91 percent reported working with secondary schools to encourage students to continue in higher education, and 92 percent offered dual or concurrent enrollment (Figure 5). Seventeen percent of responding colleges engaged in Adopt-a-School programs. Sixty-three percent opened their facilities for local school use, and a little more than 10 percent of responding colleges hosted middle colleges on their campuses.

Colleges also reported placing students in K–12 classrooms as classroom resources or teaching assistants outside of required teacher education placements (20 percent), and 21 percent participated in Head Start programs.

Civic Development

Community colleges are often uniquely positioned to participate in preparing and engaging community members in civic life. Survey responses indicated that community colleges help to foster active community participation in civic affairs through diversity awareness, leadership training, mediation, and facilitation.

Fifty-one percent of responding colleges, as shown in Figure 6, provided diversity awareness training to promote understanding and cooperation in complex multicultural communities. Eighty-one percent of respondents sponsored events that highlight the traditions of other cultures, and 62 percent offered programs that celebrate and strengthen local ethnic traditions. Only about 4 percent of colleges responding reported no diversity programs.

Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa Community College in Hayward, WI, created a community-based program to revitalize the native Ojibwa language. The college installed community signs in Ojibwa, language-labeled workplace items, and started evening language immersion sessions with "table talk" meal gatherings conducted exclusively in Ojibwa.

Proyecto Access is an award-winning enrichment program offered by Pima Community College in Tucson, AZ, targeting talented students from socially and economically disadvantaged families. The rigorous curriculum aims to increase the number of minorities in the engineering and science professions.

FIGURE 5 **Percentage of Community Colleges Involved with Local Schools**

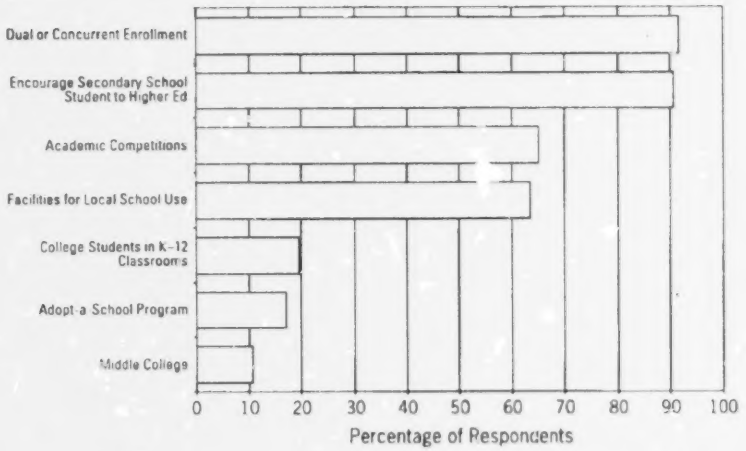
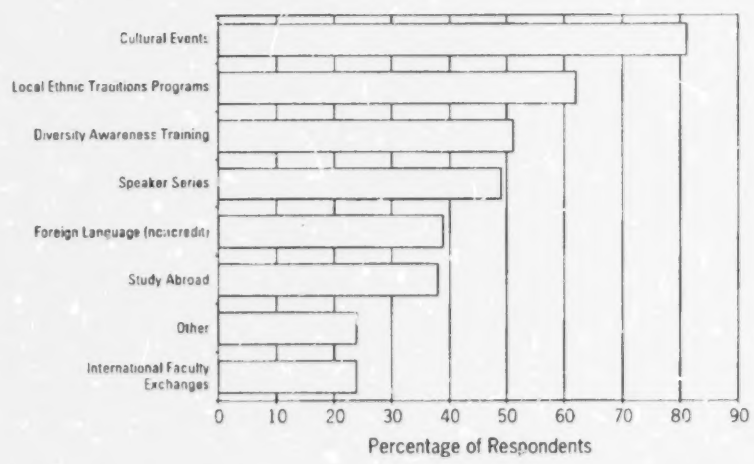

Dual or Concurrent Enrollment
Encourage Secondary School Student to Higher Ed
Academic Competitions
Facilities for Local School Use
College Students in K–12 Classrooms
Adopt-a-School Program
Middle College
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
Percentage of Respondents

FIGURE 6 **Percentage of Community Colleges Offering Diversity Programs**



Community Leadership Development

Many colleges offer new and emerging leader programs to help develop the skills and abilities of future leaders in their communities. New and emerging leader programs, which focus on cultivating community members that have demonstrated potential for community or regional leadership, are offered at 20 percent of responding colleges. Twenty-nine percent of colleges reported offering youth leadership training. Institutional size seemed to be a factor in the type of program offered. Colleges with larger enrollments (11,000 students or more) were more likely to have youth leadership programs, while small to midsize colleges (700 to 6,000 students) were more likely to have new and emerging leader programs.

Community college respondents reported on the role their institutions play as community conveners. In other efforts to enhance community leadership, 68 percent of community colleges reported facilitating community summits on a range of local issues such as planning and economic development. Twenty-two percent of responding colleges provided conflict resolution training in their communities, and 6 percent offered mediation to groups in conflict.

Richland College, TX, partners with the chamber of commerce in the Dallas area's prestigious *Leadership Richardson*, a yearlong program for emerging and experienced community leaders, including college administrators.

In Herkimer, NY, Herkimer County Community College's *Communities* program provides an unbiased nongovernmental public forum to involve community volunteers in strategic planning and visioning activities. Since its inception in 1996, the program had led to number of successful community programs and initiatives.

Serving Immigrants

Responding community colleges were in tune with the needs of their immigrant community. Thirteen percent of responding colleges hosted citizenship classes, and 4 percent offered citizenship testing (Figure 7). A high percentage of

FIGURE 7 **Percentage of Community Colleges Offering Services to Immigrants**

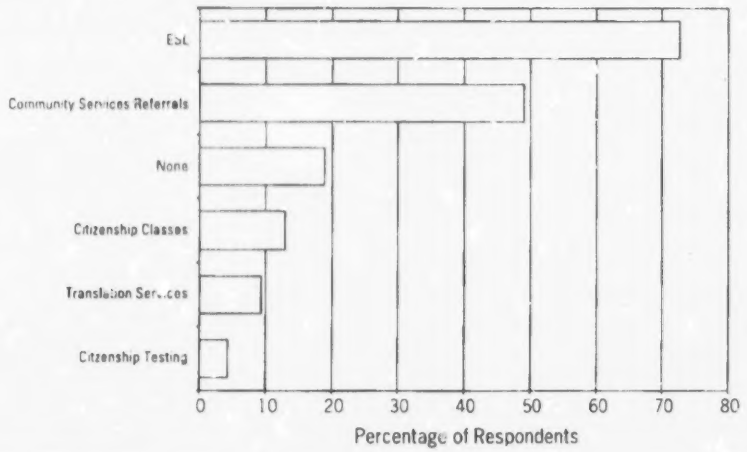
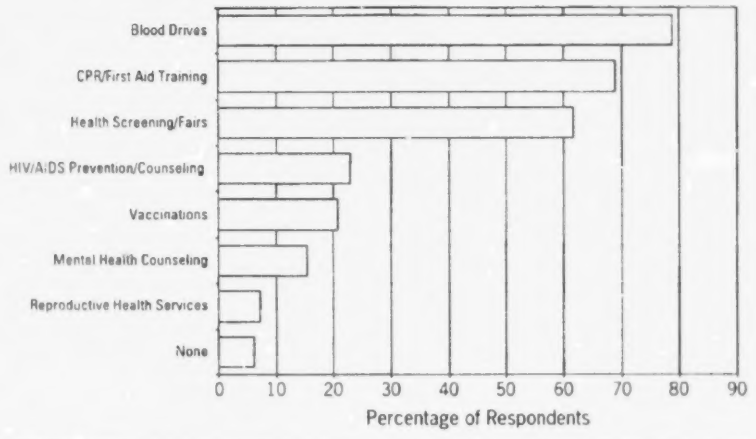


FIGURE 8 **Percentage of Community Colleges Providing Community Health Services**



colleges (73 percent) offered both noncredit and credit English as a Second Language (ESL) classes.

Although 40 percent of responding colleges with small enrollments (521–1,127) offered ESL classes, the smaller colleges provided few other services for immigrants such as referral services or citizenship classes. The larger the school, the more likely it was to offer a broad range of services to immigrant populations. In fact, all of the responding colleges with an enrollment of 7,708 or higher offered ESL and other services.

Community Health

Adequate healthcare is an issue in many communities. Many respondents recognized the effect health can have on an individual's ability to learn. Survey responses indicated that community colleges provided a range of community health services and promoted prevention by disseminating public health information. Figure 8 shows that 62 percent of respondents offered health screenings and health fairs open to the public, 79 percent held blood drives, and 69 percent offered CPR/first aid training. In addition, 23 percent of respondents provided HIV/AIDS prevention and counseling, 21 percent offered vaccinations, and over 15 percent provided mental health counseling services to the community.

Wallace State Community College in Hanceville, AL, offers dental hygiene treatment to local children who cannot afford regular checkups. Children are taught personal oral hygiene skills and are given a complete checkup, including x-rays and cleaning. The program also supplies toothpaste, a toothbrush, and dental floss for each child to take home.

Working in collaboration with area hospitals, doctors, businesses, and health clinics, Cleveland Community College in Shelby, NC, offers an annual one-day program titled Women's World for students and the community. The no-cost program includes diagnostic health screenings, flu shots, and seminars on mental, physical, and emotional well-being for women and men.

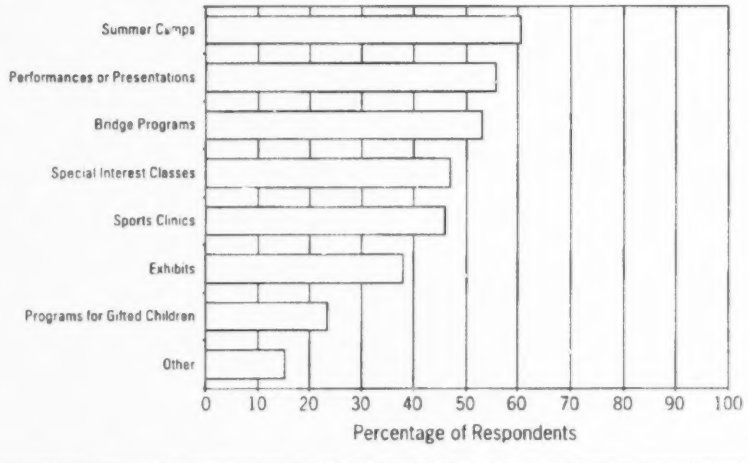
Families, Children, and Seniors

Youth and Family Programs

The majority of responding community colleges reported having programs for children and youth. By fostering volunteer service initiatives among staff, faculty, and students, almost 58 percent of colleges sponsored youth tutoring programs, and 43 percent of the colleges had mentoring programs. Colleges also worked with youth-serving organizations or initiatives such as America Reads (36 percent), Groundhog Job Shadow Day (15 percent), Big Brothers/Big Sisters (8 percent), America Counts (6 percent), and America's Promise (5 percent). Almost 20 percent of the respondents provided training and professional development to community members who work with youth in areas such as after-school programs and Boys and Girls Clubs.

In 2001, more than 400 children and their families took part in *Day of the Young Child*, a celebration and community picnic, on the Homestead Campus of Florida's Miami-Dade Community College. The college encouraged community participation by inviting accredited childcare centers and child welfare agencies in the region to attend. The Miami Book Fair International, working with volunteer faculty and students from MDCC's school of education, funded storytellers who entertained with stories from South American, Jamaican, and African American traditions. Student organizations sponsored a book fair and created a "Box City," turning boxes into local landmarks complete with roads, directional signs, and tricycles for young travelers. Early childhood education students connected classroom content to community action by creating and documenting in Creole, Spanish, and English a variety of activities, such as *Edible Art* and *Outrageous Physical Fun*, that support literacy development for young children and their families.

FIGURE 9 **Percentage of Community Colleges with Programs for Children and Youth**



To engage young people in learning, over 47 percent of responding colleges offered special interest classes, such as babysitting or studio arts, aimed toward youth. In addition, 53 percent had bridge programs to help facilitate the transition from high school to college, and 23 percent provided programs for gifted children. Almost 61 percent of respondents offered summer camps, and 46 percent hosted sports clinics. Responding colleges also offered performances and presentations for children (56 percent).

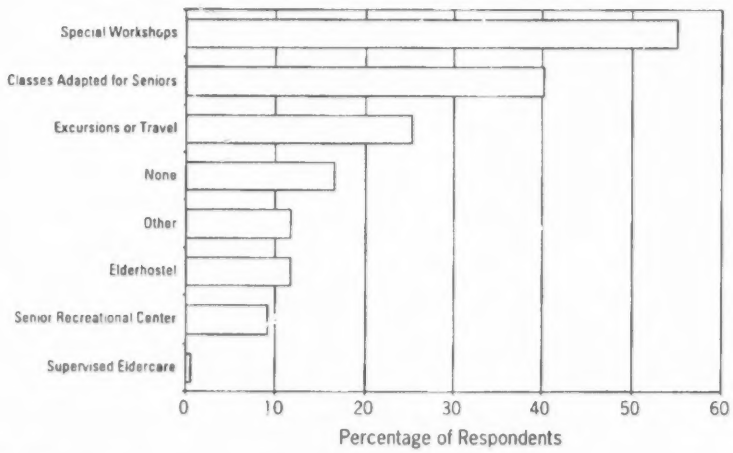
Survey respondents also reflected a concern for family needs. The availability of childcare on campus—open to the community and run by the college—was reported at roughly 37 percent of responding colleges. Almost 37 percent of respondents had parenting classes, and 33 percent offered programs for at-risk families or teens. Roughly 10 percent of colleges offered intergenerational programs aimed at a cross section of the community.

Children can run away and join the circus for three weeks every summer at Berkshire Community College's *Circus Camp* in Massachusetts. Staffed by circus professionals, this popular camp offers children ages 8 to 12 instruction in circus fundamentals such as tumbling, wire walking, trapeze, juggling, clown makeup, prop construction, and arena decoration. The program has recently expanded so camp veterans, ages 13 to 15, can continue training.

Programs for Senior Citizens

College respondents provided continuing education and special programs for the senior population in their communities. Special workshops targeted to seniors were reported at 55 percent of the colleges;

FIGURE 10 **Percentage of Community Colleges with Programs for Senior Citizens**



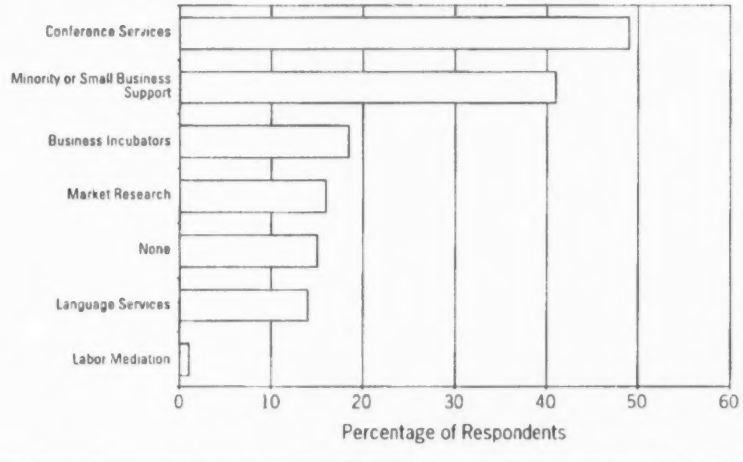
40 percent offered regular classes adapted for seniors, and over 25 percent sponsored excursions or travel opportunities. Reduced tuition was a common practice for responding colleges targeting senior citizens. More than 44 percent provided free tuition to those over 65. Forty-percent offered space-available discounts or fee waivers, and almost 28 percent had blanket tuition discounts (Figure 10).

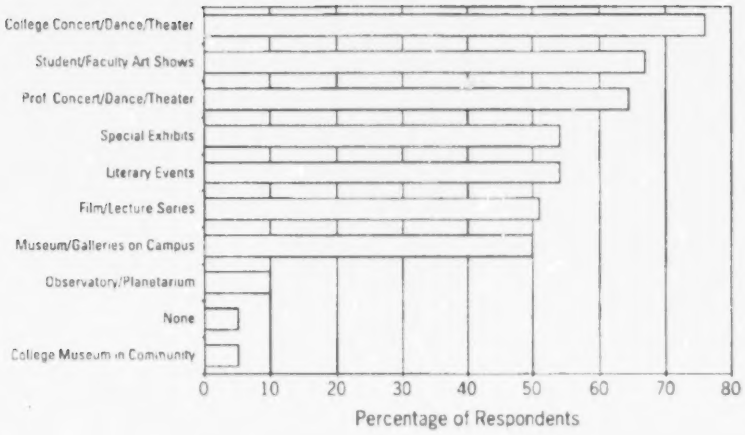
The *Heritage Area Agency on Aging*, a department at Kirkwood Community College, IA, offers resources, educational seminars, and regional training to people age 60 and above as well as their families, communities, and governments. Heritage also offers individuals the opportunity to show their support of elderly programs through the Older Iowans Fund in partnership with the Foundation at Kirkwood Community College.

Business

Community colleges were responsive to a variety of local business and industry needs. More than 95 percent of responding colleges provided meeting space for local businesses; 73 percent, conference space; 56 percent, teleconferencing facilities; and 49 percent, conference services. They also offered a number of special services for business including support for minority or small business ventures (41 percent). Nineteen percent created business incubators, and 16 percent conducted market research for local businesses (Figure 11).

FIGURE 11 **Percentage of Community Colleges Offering Services to Business**





Community Life

Community colleges are often the major cultural institution in their region. Survey responses illustrated how community colleges enrich their communities. For example, 47 percent of responding colleges reported organizing and sponsoring travel programs available to the community. Several colleges also offered access to theater arts, fine arts, literature, and music (Figure 12), with over 64 percent of respondents hosting professional dance, concert, or theater performances. Seventy-six percent reported offering college concert dance and theater productions, and 34 percent opened their facilities to community theater companies.

Fifty-four percent of responding colleges reported holding literary events such as poetry readings and storytelling, and 38 percent of colleges produced literary journals. Over 67 percent held faculty and student art shows, and more than half of college respondents maintained museums and galleries on campus.

Community colleges also provide other forums for expression. Forty-five percent of responding colleges supported Web sites, newsgroups, and Internet bulletin boards or chat rooms for the community. Twenty-five percent of respondents supported a cable access TV station. A smaller number sponsored college radio stations (18 percent) or hosted public television and radio stations on campus (8 percent). Sixty-one percent produced college newspapers distributed to the community, and 44 percent reported producing newsletters.

Conclusion

Community colleges engage in a wide range of efforts to meet community needs. They are forming partnerships with local and regional institutions to expand their resources in engaging a diverse population. Colleges regularly share facilities, provide health services, foster new and emerging leaders, and provide services for children, families, senior citizens, and immigrant populations. By encouraging broad-based volunteer efforts and providing service learning opportunities, community colleges also help students, faculty, and administrators to connect with their communities.

In their role as conveners, many colleges find active solutions to community challenges by hosting community meetings and summits or mediating groups in conflict. In addition to encouraging civic and leadership development, community colleges often serve as the primary source of cultural enrichment in a community and provide an array of concert and theater performances, literary events, and museum experiences. Considering the range of programs reported in this survey, it is evident that community colleges are tailoring programs to encourage community development and a lifetime of learning.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON COMMUNITY COLLEGE ENGAGEMENT IN COMMUNITY PROGRAMS AND SERVICES, CONTACT:

ELLEN HAUSE
American Association of Community Colleges
One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 110
Washington, DC 20036-1176
Phone: (202) 728-0200, ext. 217
Fax: (202) 728-2965
E-mail: ehause@aacc.nche.edu
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